

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6479

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, EI, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: HUNGER STRIKE OVER

1. PROVO IRA PRISONERS ENDED THEIR HUNGER STRIKE FEBRUARY 16 AFTER AGREEMENT WITH GOI ON MINOR CHANGES IN PRISON CONDITIONS. ONE STRIKER HAD BEEN FASTING FOR 45 DAYS AND HAD BEEN HOSPITALIZED. HE WAS BEING GIVEN WATER INTRAVENOUSLY, AND SOME SOURCES SUSPECTED THAT NOURISHMENT WAS ADDED WITHOUT PRISONER'S KNOWLEDGE. (GOI CLAIMS TO AVOID FORCE-FEEDING, SO THIS RUMOR MAY BE MERE SCANDAL.) IN ANY CASE, THERE WAS AN APPARENT DANGER OF DEATH.

2. CONCESSIONS MADE TO IRA PRISONERS BY GOI MINISTER OF JUSTICE APPEAR VERY SMALL. LEADING POINT IS THAT PROVOS HAVE BEEN SEPARATED (BY A FEW EMPTY CELLS) FROM CRIMINALS IN OTHER CATEGORIES. THIS ENABLES PROVOS TO CLAIM THAT THEY HAVE BEEN GRANTED SPECIAL "POLITICAL" STATUS. GOI, ON OTHER HAND, CLAIMS THAT IT HAS NOT AND WILL NEVER GRANT ANY SUCH SPECIAL STATUS AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE. IN ADDITION, HOWEVER, PROVOS CAN CREDIBLY CLAIM THAT GOI "NEGOTIATED" WITH THEM. THIS MEANS THAT THEY HAVE SCORED A FEW POINTS AGAINST JUSTICE MINISTER COONEY.

3. ON OTHER HAND, PUBLIC AND PRESS HAVE ACCUSED PROVOS OF PLAYING CHEAP GAMES WITH THEIR SUPPORTERS' LIVES. DEMONSTRATIONS ORGANIZED BY PROVOS IN SUPPORT OF HUNGER STRIKERS DREW NEGLIGIBLE SUPPORT.

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DEATH OF A STRIKER WOULD INEVITABLY HAVE CAUSED SOME PROBLEMS,

BUT THERE IS NO SIGN AT THIS STAGE THAT GENERAL PUBLIC HAD BECOME
EMOTIONALLY INVOLVED. WE WOULD CONCLUDE THAT HUNGER-STRIKE WEAPON
STILL HAS SOME POWER, BUT NOT AS MUCH AS IN YEARS PAST.
REND AHL

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